What does think love he is?

By Natnael Dagnaw

B and H at Belul Coffee shop

"Do you know N.? He's a writer, and he knows you. He once mentioned one of your friends' names in our conversation," she said as we sat in a street coffee shop, waiting for our friends.

"Yeah, I know him. I mean, I've read some of his pieces. Was M. the name he mentioned? They were close for some time, but I don't think they are now," I replied.

"I dated him, and writers aren't that bad as dates, contrary to popular opinion," she said with a faint smile.

"I don't know the popular idea you mentioned. But by 'date,' do you mean he was your boyfriend?" I asked.

"Not exactly. I mean, we went out on three dates. I didn't want it to go any further," she said.

A glimpse of emotion crossed her face—sadness, perhaps—but it disappeared quickly, replaced by a smirk.

"Tell me more," I said. I wasn't sure if I wanted to know more, but with the information I had, I couldn't picture them together.

She took a sip of her coffee and stared at my face for a few seconds before continuing.

"I met him at a photo exhibition my friend curated. It was at the Bermil Gallery. I remember seeing him for the first time and feeling something I can't quite describe. It wasn't love or anything like that. I saw him from the side and got this unnameable feeling. Things just fell into place, and I found myself having a conversation with him about one of the photographs on the wall. It was a black-and-white photo of a woman, taken from a low angle—from her feet to her head. You couldn't tell if the woman was nude or not. Anyway, we talked about it and couldn't agree, so we decided to continue the conversation over coffee."

I listened, arms crossed, without interrupting her.

"Then we met and talked about everything except the photo. After four meetings, I went to his place. We had sex, of course—hah. And you know what? He photographed me from a low angle, just like that photo in the gallery. The funny thing is, he photographed me both clothed and nude," she said with a laugh.

As she spoke, I tried to picture the moments she described, but it was hard to imagine her naked with a guy I didn't know in person.

"We started dating after that. I liked the sex and the conversations. What else did I need?" she said, shrugging.

"Then why did you stop?" I interrupted.

"I wasn't sure back then. I disappeared on him without much thought. But now I realize it was because I'm afraid to love. I don't like loving anyone," she admitted.

I wanted to ask why but stopped myself. Instead, I asked, "What made you think about him now? I mean, what reminded you of him?"

"Reminded me? I think about him all the time. But if you're asking why I'm telling you this, it's because I want to forget him. Talking about him might help me let go. At least, I hope it will," she said.

"You mean you love him?" I asked, looking straight into her eyes. Her gaze was broken and teary. Where were the innocent white eyes I remembered? These were the eyes of someone in love, filled with pain.

"I don't know if it's love. But I miss him. And I hate that he's stuck in my mind all this time. I hate that he makes me want to call and talk to him every day," she said.

I moved to her side and hugged her. Her tears soaked into my shirt.

I tried to recall everything M. had told me about N. He was just a normal guy, a nerdy wannabe writer. But now, he seemed to be someone entirely different—someone I couldn't figure out. I don't think even M. bothered about him after they stopped talking.

This is how people are. We can't know them fully. We are one person for our friends, another for our lovers, and someone else entirely for our parents.

She pulled herself out of my arms and said, "Sorry I bothered you."

"Haha, anytime," I replied.

"You want me to cry all the time?" She stared at me with a humorously surprised face.

I wanted to say If it makes you stay in my arms, but my mouth betrayed me:

"I'm here to listen to you anytime," I said.

"I know. You're one of a kind," she said, smiling as her wet eyes brightened.

I saw some of our friends coming toward us from the distance. I called the waitress to pay for the coffee.

- Should I call him?

She said when we started walking out of the coffee shop.

- I don't know. I replied

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M from her home

Where is the edge of friendship? How long can you be a friend to someone?

We have been friends for more than three years. Me and N. But it was kind of weird from the start. I always have friends and I know how you feel when you are a friend. We talk for long hours, and I always feel kind of weird when we say bye or good night to each other.

"I think we are meant to live together haha" He'd joke

" Maybe you are my lost twin" I'd reply

One Sunday we went to this park. We have books. I remember mine was Norwegian Wood and his, he, who was the writer's name? Oh yeah, Emil Cioran's The Trouble with Being Born.

We had some snacks and coffee on our hands. We sat in the park for hours reading. Since our phones were locked, none of our friends were disturbing us. After hours of reading, we talked about some kind of existential things. The books we were reading helped us on the topic.

"What do you like about him? I mean Murakami" He asked

I gathered my breath and said " He has some kind of quality. You know, you can say it is literary quality, he writes some weird stuff you want to read. And surprisingly they are relatable. And I like his music taste."

" Okay," he said

" I have read some stories and I agree with what you have said. I think takes some talent to make weird stuff interesting "

" Oh, yeah" I agreed

That time I don't know why I was thinking about kissing him. Maybe it was pushed by the horniness I got when I read the book. I breathed and said

" Who read Cioran on Sunday?" a smile was on my face

"Me haha" He replied

"Boring..." We laughed, and suddenly, he put the book aside and approached me and slept on my lap.

"Be careful I may kiss you" I said stretching my legs for him to be comfortable

" Please, be bold and do that" he replied closing his eyes

And bum, I kissed him tight.

He reacted nothing. I mean he kissed me but said or showed nothing. It is N. Nothing surprises him. He slept for minutes. He woke up and kissed me many times. And to your surprise, he fingered me once and made me give him a HJ.

He hasn't said anything from that day on. We acted as if nothing happened. After a week, I stopped talking to him.

It was after a month that he sent me this piece, 'A letter for the park' (I don't think it is a letter, maybe for the park, yeah, not for me haha), about the day we spent in the park. My reply was, Hehe writers! But I liked it so much and confessed to myself that I was in love with him.

A week after I read the piece I called him and set up a date on the park. That day I was serious and told him about my feelings. He told me about a woman he dated. I know her. She is a friend of one of my friends and his feelings toward her.

"I'm not sure what happened but she disappeared on me. I couldn't access her in any way. It was sad. You stopped talking to me and she too. You know I know my feelings for you since we started talking but I also know we can't be together. So, I worked on it. That day We kissed and had some sex stuff. When I wrote you that letter, I thought I fell out of the love I had for you, but I can't be sure. I like you, M, and I like B too."

We didn't decide on anything that day. We stopped anything open and talked about other stuff that could make us laugh. We went to his place and spent two days together. We spent those two days in a dreamland full of passion and music.

And now it's been weeks since we were secretly in a relationship. I don't talk about him to my friends. I don't know what will happen if B starts talking to him. He hasn't ever mentioned her name from that day on. I go to his home for the weekend or we meet at that park on Sunday.

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A poem for the park, A piece N sent to M

"Yesterday, I went to the park alone for the first time. I sat on the bench where we once shared snacks. I didn’t come here to miss you or to chase nostalgia; I came to write a poem—a poem about the park itself. But as I began, I realized the park’s story was already written, intricately woven with us.

We walked, sat, ate, kissed, read, and wrote—every tiny moment of ours was entwined in each tree and shadow. I revisited all those memories. We were a blessing to the park's story, yet also a sad truth. I couldn't ignore it, so I wrote the truth: we fell out of each other's lives.

Around me, life unfolded—children laughed, couples held hands, and geese glided on the pond. The scene was bright and warm, while memories of us lingered in soft greys. The park continues to thrive, brighter without us, a quiet place echoing the bittersweet reminder of something that couldn't last." Sent on telegram, Jan 2022 at 3 PM

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H from the unrequited land

What does love think he is? Really, what is love? Is it not some abstract shit? Is it not some myth we fed and made giant?

What does love think he is? Why does my heart ache when I think about her? Why does my heartbeat differ when I think about her?

Ironically, I don't even believe in the existence of love, but I feel like I am love. In love with a woman who doesn't love anyone but, ironically, is in love with someone else too. Haha, I love life.

B, my friend, my brilliant friend who I like to talk to and be around. B, my friend, who I love to kiss and touch her hair. My heart feels weird every time I see her. I feel this pain every time she is dating someone.

And she is in love with someone she doesn't even know for a long time. Someone she didn't talk, laugh with, get drunk and sing with.

My heart broke when I saw her eyes in pain. A guy I didn't even meet for coffee caused that pain. Or I don't know. She created herself. Those innocent eyes I always stare at are dead. Those white balls with a dark spot in the middle that I kissed many times are dead now. Who killed them? Love or N?

After B told me all that, I called M and asked about N. She said she didn't know anything, but it didn't seem like she didn't know. I heard some trembling in her voice.

I wanted to tell her about what B told me, but I thought it would be nice to talk about it over coffee. So, I asked her for a meet-up on the weekend. She said she had a meeting. It has been like that for a while. I understood what she said and hung up the phone.

The night was very disturbing. I tried to watch a movie, but I couldn't follow. I stopped it and opened the music. It helped me for some minutes, but the disturbance came back. I took a shower. While in the shower, I wanked. I hate to do that, but I did it to help myself release the

stress. After showering, I called B. It was busy for a long time.

I tried repeatedly and got a message:

"I'll call you tomorrow."

"Fuck you" was my unsent reply.

I sent, "I was to check on you." and went to my bed and started counting from 300 to 0. I thought it might help me sleep.

300, 299, 298, 297, 296, 295, 294, 293, 292, 291, 290…

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N the writer

This is fiction. I don't know any person by the name B, M and H. Belul coffee shop is non-existent. If you want to use it for your business you can, buddy.

I was in the middle of these people yesterday. I couldn't enjoy the gathering, but I couldn't leave too. So, I picked up my phone and started to play with imagery and words. And what you read is the fruition of that play. After all, I am a writer, right?

Humans are dynamic, and you don't know what they feel. And friendship is not always friendship. People mess up and fall in love; Mainly, it is one-sided. I tried to capture that dynamics.

We all know who B is. She is the woman all men fantasize about meeting at a certain time. M is that friend you sleep with but are afraid to tell to the world. H is that friend of women most men hate. He always loves one of his girlfriends, but he has no gut to tell, so he goes to his home and masturbates.

I hope you enjoyed it.

Cheers from the boredom zone.

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